

LETTERS *to the Editor*

"Pharmacist and the Physician"

To the Editor: The recent article, "The Pharmacist and the Physician," by J. E. Goyan which appeared in *CALIFORNIA MEDICINE*, May 1971, page 95, is an interesting array of information regarding one of the most vexing problems in American medicine, namely, the widespread use of drugs by physicians for a variety of ailments. I believe that some thought should be given to a different role from that suggested by Dr. Goyan, namely the finding of some substitute for drug therapy.

There is little disagreement, anywhere one goes in the world, regarding the value of penicillin in certain specific infectious situations; of insulin in certain kinds of diabetes; of digitalis, in certain kinds of heart disease, etc. In other words, there is an appropriate worldwide acceptance of certain pharmacologic agents against certain specific disorders. The list if one were to develop it fully, would probably not be an overpoweringly long one. Most of the concern over drugs use has come in situations where there is no agreement regarding what drugs should be used—let alone what dose, or what response to look for. The "chemicalization" of our population that is taking place both on prescription and non-prescription drugs needs an alternative.

One such alternative may be illustrated by some recent experiences. I have, in the recent past, had two patients who had come to America recently from Europe, who expressed some concern over my prescription of meprobamate for what seemed to me to be a mild tension-anxiety problem. They stated that in their country their doctor would have advised some sort of physical medicine therapy. This concept was further reinforced on a

recent trip to Russia that was undertaken to look at their health care system. Representatives of the Ministry of Health told us that we would see many things that would seem odd to us, that perhaps the most would be the widespread use of physical medicine. He then added in an aside, "We feel that this may be more appropriate than drugs, hormones, and shots." True enough in our visits to the various polyclinics and hospitals we could not but be impressed by the enormous percentage of available resources that were devoted to physical medicine. We saw individuals receiving exercise programs for hypertension, various sorts of hot baths, vapor treatments, and the like for ailments ranging from the usual musculo-skeletal disturbances to what seemed to be obvious evidences of anxiety and tension. I came away from this latter trip not sure whether physical medicine did represent an answer to this large segment of our patient population but with the feeling that others more knowledgeable about the use of such measures should look into it. It, therefore, seems to me that while there is certainly a need for an expanded role of the pharmacist as an expert in drug interactions and as a consultant to the physician in these matters there is an even more urgent need to look for alternatives to the widespread use of drugs of all sorts.

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Report on Student Participation In Organized Medicine

*Prepared by Medical Student Representatives to the CMA
Committee on the Role of Medicine in Society*

To the Editor: Last month, for the fourth time, the California Medical Association sent medical student delegates to an American Medical Asso-